

Language Studies Department Statement on Plagiarism

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Plagiarism Defined

Webster's defines plagiarism as "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work" (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996).

In other words, plagiarism is the misappropriation of another person's words or ideas. It is therefore of paramount importance that you properly cite all sources and make no claim to originality when restating someone else's thoughts to develop or underscore your own argument. Mastery of the technical aspects of writing should help you ward off any ambiguity regarding ownership or authorship of a statement or idea.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

1. When you take handwritten notes or cut and paste on the computer, carefully document all published sources, including websites, CD-ROMs, and other electronic media. Identify sources by author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and page numbers.
2. When quoting from a source, indicate borrowed phrases and sentences by enclosing them in quotation marks or, in the case of longer passages, by setting them off in indented single-space blocks.
3. Paraphrasing, that is, substituting your own synonyms for the words in a borrowed quotation, constitutes plagiarism if you claim the idea as your own. You should credit the source by referencing the author or title and page number in parentheses. Example: (Vasquez 99).
4. It is not necessary to document sources for commonly known facts, proverbial sayings or famous quotations, but facts that are not common knowledge and are derived from the work of another must be cited. If you are not certain, cite.
5. Provide complete documentation of your sources in an alphabetized list of "Works Cited" at the end of your paper.
6. Submitting your own work for credit more than once, without authorization from your professors, is a form of plagiarism.

How to Document Sources

To avoid plagiarism and learn about accepted systems of documentation for both print and electronic sources, consult Chapters 42 and 43 of the Holt Handbook, 5th edition (Orlando: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1999).

The MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines for citing sources are a commonly accepted standard in the fields of foreign languages and literature, and are recommended by the Language Studies Department. These guidelines are available in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 5th edition (NY: MLA, 1999) and are summarized in the Holt Handbook, Chapter 43.

The Nimitz Library pages on “Starting Your Research” offer similar information online.